MARX

CRITIQUE OF THE GOTHA PROGRAMME

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KARL MARX

Critique of the Gotha Programme

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PUBLISHERS NOTE

Critique of the Gotha Programme, written by Marx in 1875, contains critical remarks in relation to the draft programme of a United Workers' Party of Germany This draft suffered from serious mistakes and concessions of principle to Lassalleanism Marx and Engels approved the idea of founding a united socialist party of Germany but denounced the ideological compromise with Lassalleans and subjected it to withering criticism In this work Marx formulated many ideas on the major issues of scientific communism, such as the socialist revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, a period of transition from capitalism to communism, the two phases of communist society, the production and distribution of the social product under socialism and the principal features of communism, proletarian internationalism and the party of the working class

Marx also further elaborates his theory of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat. He puts forward an important proposition about the historical inevitability of a special stage of transition from capitalism to communism with the corresponding form of state which he calls the '*revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat* (see p 26) "The great significance of Marx's explanations is ' Lenin wrote with regard to *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, "that here, too, he consistently applies materialist dialectics, the theory of development and regards communism as something which develops *out of* capitalism Instead of scholastically invented, 'concocted' definitions and fruitless disputes over words (What is socialism? What is communism?), Marx gives an analysis of what might be called the stages of the economic maturity of communism (V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 25 p 471)

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Karl Marx

CRITIQUE OF THE GOTHA PROGRAMME

FOREWORD BY FREDERICK ENGELS[1]

■

The manuscript published here the covering letter to Bracke as well as the critique of the draft programme was sent in 1875, shortly before the Gotha Unity Congress,[2] to Bracke for communication to Geib, Auer, Bebel, and Lieb knecht and subsequent return to Marx Since the Halle Party Congress[3] has put the discussion of the Gotha Programme on the agenda of the Party, I think I would be guilty of sup pression if I any longer withheld from publicity this impor tant perhaps the most important document relevant to this discussion

But the manuscript has yet another and more far reaching significance Here for the first time Marx's attitude to the line adopted by Lassalle in his agitation from the very beginning is clearly and firmly set forth, both as regards Las salle's economic principles and his tactics

The ruthless severity with which the draft programme is dissected here, the mercilessness with which the results ob tained are enunciated and the shortcomings of the draft laid bare all this today, after fifteen years, can no longer give offence Specific Lassalleans now exist only abroad as isolat ed ruins, and in Halle the Gotha Programme was given up even by its creators as altogether inadequate

Nevertheless, I have omitted a few sharp personal expressions and judgements where these were immaterial, and replaced them by dots Marx himself would have done so if he had published the manuscript today The violence of the language in some passages was provoked by two cir cumstances In the first place, Marx and I had been more intimately connected with the German movement than with any other, we were, therefore, bound to be particularly perturbed by the decidedly retrograde step manifested by this draft programme And secondly, we were at that time,

hardly two years after the Hague Congress of the International,[4] engaged in the most violent struggle against Bakunin and his anarchists, who made us responsible for everything that happened in the labour movement in Germany; hence we had to expect that we would also be saddled with the secret paternity of this programme. These considerations do not now exist and so there is no necessity for the passages in question.

For reasons arising from the Press Law, also, a few sentences have been indicated only by dots. Where I have had to choose a milder expression this has been enclosed in square brackets. Otherwise the text has been reproduced word for word.

London, January 6, 1891

Published in the journal
Die Neue Zeit, Bd. 1, No. 18,
1890-91

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Karl Marx

LETTER TO W BRACKE

■

London, May 5,
1875

Dear Bracke,

When you have read the following critical marginal notes on the Unity Programme, would you be so good as to send them on to Geib and Auer, Bebel and Liebknecht for examination I am exceedingly busy and have to overstep by far the limit of work allowed me by the doctors Hence it was anything but a "pleasure" to write such a lengthy screed It was however necessary so that the steps to be taken by me later on would not be misinterpreted by our friends in the Party for whom this communication is intended

After the Unity Congress has been held, Engels and I will publish a short statement to the effect that our position is altogether remote from the said programme of principles and that we have nothing to do with it

This is indispensable because the opinion the entirely erroneous opinion is held abroad and assiduously nurtured by enemies of the Party that we secretly guide from here the movement of the so called Eisenach Party[5] In a Russian book that has recently appeared,[6] Bakunin still makes me responsible, for example, not only for all the programmes, etc, of that party but even for every step taken by Liebknecht from the day of his co operation with the People's Party[7]

Apart from this, it is my duty not to give recognition, even by diplomatic silence, to what in my opinion is a thoroughly objectionable programme that demoralises the Party

Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes If, therefore, it was not possible and the conditions of the time did not permit it to go *beyond* the Eisenach programme, one should simply have concluded an agreement for action against the common enemy But by drawing up a programme of principles (instead of postpon

ing this until it has been prepared for by a considerable period of common activity) one sets up before the whole world landmarks by which it measures the level of the Party movement

The Lassallean leaders came because circumstances forced them to If they had been told in advance that there would be haggling about principles, they would *have had* to be content with a programme of action or a plan of organisation for common action Instead of this, one permits them to arrive armed with mandates, recognises these mandates on one's part as binding, and thus surrenders unconditionally to those who are themselves in need of help To crown the whole business, they are holding a congress *before the Congress of Compromise*, while one's own party is holding its congress *post festum* * One obviously had a desire to stifle all criticism and to give one's own party no opportunity for reflection One knows that the mere fact of unification is satisfying to the workers, but it is a mistake to believe that this momentary success is not bought too dearly

For the rest, the programme is no good, even apart from its sanctification of the Lassallean articles of faith

I shall be sending you in the near future the last parts of the French edition of *Capital* ** The printing was held up for a considerable time by a ban of the French Government The thing will be ready this week or early next week Have you received the previous six parts? Please let me have the address of Bernhard Becker, to whom I must also send the final parts

The bookshop of the *Volksstaat*[8] has peculiar ways of doing things Up to this moment, for example, I have not been sent a single copy of the *Cologne Communist Trial* ***

With best regards,

Yours,

Karl Marx

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* The Unity Congress was held in Gotha on May 22 27, 1875 that of the Lassalleans before the Gotha Congress, in May, and of the Eisenachers in Hamburg on June 8 *Ed*

** The French translation of Volume I of *Capital*, edited by Marx, was published in instalments in Paris between 1872 and 1875 *Ed*

*** K Marx *Enthullungen uber den Kommunisten Prozess zu Koln* (Exposures of the Cologne Communist Trial) (see Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Berlin, 1960, Band 8, S 405 70) *Ed*

■

Karl Marx

MARGINAL NOTES TO THE PROGRAMME OF THE GERMAN WORKERS' PARTY

■

I

1 "Labour is the source of all wealth and all culture, *and since* useful labour is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society"

First Part of the Paragraph "Labour is the source of all wealth and all culture"

Labour is *not the source* of all wealth *Nature* is just as much the source of use values (and it is surely of such that material wealth consists!) as labour, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labour power The above phrase is to be found in all children's primers and is correct in so far as it is *implied* that labour is performed with the appurtenant subjects and instruments But a socialist programme cannot allow such bourgeois phrases to pass over in silence the *conditions* that alone give them meaning And in so far as man from the beginning behaves towards nature, the primary source of all instruments and subjects of labour, as an owner, treats her as belonging to him, his labour becomes the source of use values, therefore also of wealth The bourgeois have very good grounds for falsely ascribing *supernatural creative power* to labour, since precisely from the fact that labour depends on nature it follows that the man who possesses no other property than his labour power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labour He can work only with their permission, hence live only with their permission

Let us now leave the sentence as it stands, or rather limps What would one have expected in conclusion? Obviously this

"Since labour is the source of all wealth, no one in society can appropriate wealth except as the product of labour Therefore, if he himself does not work, he lives by the la bour of others and also acquires his culture at the expense of the labour of others"

Instead of this, by means of the verbal rivet *"and since"* a second proposition is added in order to draw a conclusion from this and not from the first one

Second Part of the Paragraph "Useful labour is possible only in society and through society"

According to the first proposition, labour was the source of all wealth and all culture, therefore no society is possible without labour Now we learn, conversely, that no "useful' labour is possible without society

One could just as well have said that only in society can useless and even socially harmful labour become a branch of gainful occupation, that only in society can one live by being idle, etc, etc in short, one could just as well have copied the whole of Rousseau

And what is "useful" labour? Surely only labour which produces the intended useful result A savage and man was a savage after he had ceased to be an ape who kills an ani mal with a stone, who collects fruits, etc, performs "useful" labour

Thirdly The Conclusion "And since useful labour is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all mem bers of society"

A fine conclusion! If useful labour is possible only in so ciety and through society, the proceeds of labour belong to society and only so much therefrom accrues to the indivi dual worker as is not required to maintain the "condition" of labour, society

In fact, this proposition has at all times been advanced by *the champions of the state of society prevailing at any given time* First come the claims of the government and every thing that sticks to it, since it is the social organ for the maintenance of the social order, then come the claims of the various kinds of private property, for the various kinds of private property are the foundations of society, etc One sees that such hollow phrases can be twisted and turned as desired

The first and second parts of the paragraph have some intelligible connection only in the following wording

"Labour becomes the source of wealth and culture only as social labour," or, what is the same thing, "in and through society"

This proposition is incontestably correct, for although isolated labour (its material conditions presupposed) can create use values, it can create neither wealth nor culture

But equally incontestable is this other proposition

"In proportion as labour develops socially, and becomes thereby a source of wealth and culture, poverty and destitution develop among the workers, and wealth and culture among the non workers"

This is the law of all history hitherto What, therefore, had to be done here, instead of setting down general phrases about "labour" and "society", was to prove concretely how in present capitalist society the material, etc, conditions have at last been created which enable and compel the workers to lift this social curse

In fact, however, the whole paragraph, bungled in style and content, is only there in order to inscribe the Lassallean catchword of the "undiminished proceeds of labour" as a slogan at the top of the party banner I shall return later to the "proceeds of labour", "equal right", etc, since the same thing recurs in a somewhat different form further on

> 2 "In present day society, the instruments of labour are the monopoly of the capitalist class, the resulting dependence of the working class is the cause of misery and servitude in all its forms"

This sentence, borrowed from the Rules of the International, is incorrect in this "improved" edition

In present day society the instruments of labour are the monopoly of the landowners (the monopoly of property in land is even the basis of the monopoly of capital) *and* the capitalists In the passage in question, the Rules of the International do not mention either the one or the other class of monopolists They speak of the "*monopoly of the means of labour, that is, the sources of life*" The addition, "*sources of life*", makes it sufficiently clear that land is included in the instruments of labour

The correction was introduced because Lassalle, for reasons now generally known, attacked *only* the capitalist class and not the landowners In England, the capitalist is usually not even the owner of the land on which his factory stands

> 3 "The emancipation of labour demands the promotion of the instruments of labour to the common property of society and the co-operative regulation of the total labour with a fair distribution of the proceeds of labour"

"Promotion of the instruments of labour to the common property"(!) ought obviously to read their "conversion into the common property", but this only in passing

What are "*proceeds of labour*"? The product of labour or its value? And in the latter case, is it the total value of the product or only that part of the value which labour has newly added to the value of the means of production consumed?

"Proceeds of labour" is a loose notion which Lassalle has put in the place of definite economic conceptions

What is "a fair distribution"?

Do not the bourgeois assert that the present day distribution is "fair"? And is it not, in fact, the only "fair" distribution on the basis of the present day mode of production? Are economic relations regulated by legal conceptions or do not, on the contrary, legal relations arise from economic ones? Have not also the socialist sectarians the most varied notions about "fair" distribution?

To understand what is implied in this connection by the phrase "fair distribution", we must compare the first paragraph with this one The latter presupposes a society where in "the instruments of labour are common property and the total labour is co operatively regulated", and from the first paragraph we learn that "the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society"

"To all members of society"? To those who do not work as well? What remains then of the "undiminished proceeds of labour"? Only to those members of society who work? What remains then of the "equal right" of all members of society?

But "all members of society" and "equal right" are obviously mere phrases The kernel consists in this, that in

this communist society every worker must receive the "undiminished" Lassallean "proceeds of labour".

Let us take first of all the words "proceeds of labour" in the sense of the product of labour, then the co operative proceeds of labour are the *total social product*

From this must now be deducted

First, cover for replacement of the means of production used up

Secondly, additional portion for expansion of production

Thirdly, reserve or insurance funds to provide against accidents, dislocations caused by natural calamities, etc

These deductions from the "undiminished proceeds of labour" are an economic necessity and their magnitude is to be determined according to available means and forces, and partly by computation of probabilities, but they are in no way calculable by equity

There remains the other part of the total product, intended to serve as means of consumption

Before this is divided among the individuals, there has to be deducted again from it

First, the general costs of administration not belonging to production

This part will, from the outset, be very considerably restricted in comparison with present day society and it diminishes in proportion as the new society develops

Secondly, that which is intended for the common satisfaction of needs, such as schools, health services, etc

From the outset this part grows considerably in comparison with present day society and it grows in proportion as the new society develops

Thirdly, funds for those unable to work, etc, in short, for what is included under so called official poor relief today

Only now do we come to the "distribution" which the programme, under Lassallean influence, alone has in view in its narrow fashion, namely, to that part of the means of consumption which is divided among the individual producers of the co operative society

The "undiminished proceeds of labour" have already unnoticeably become converted into the "diminished" proceeds, although what the producer is deprived of in his capacity as a private individual benefits him directly or indirectly in his capacity as a member of society

Just as the phrase of the "undiminished proceeds of la bour" has disappeared, so now does the phrase of the "pro ceeds of labour" disappear altogether

Within the co operative society based on common owner ship of the means of production, the producers do not ex change their products, just as little does the labour employed on the products appear here *as the value* of these products, as a material quality possessed by them, since now, in contrast to capitalist society, individual labour no longer exists in an indirect fashion but directly as a component part of the total labour The phrase "proceeds of labour", objectionable also today on account of its ambiguity, thus loses all meaning

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from capitalist society, which is thus in every respect. economically, morally and intellec tually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges Accordingly, the individual producer receives back from society after the deductions have been made exactly what he gives to it What he has given to it is his individual quantum of labour For example, the social working day consists of the sum of the individual hours of work, the individual labour time of the individual producer is the part of the social working day contributed by him, his share in it He receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such and such an amount of labour (after deducting his labour for the common funds), and with this certificate he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as costs the same amount of labour The same amount of labour which he has given to society in one form he receives back in another

Here obviously the same principle prevails as that which regulates the exchange of commodities, as far as this is ex change of equal values Content and form are changed, be cause under the altered circumstances no one can give any thing except his labour, and because, on the other hand, nothing can pass to the ownership of individuals except in dividual means of consumption But, as far as the distribu tion of the latter among the individual producers is concerned, the same principle prevails as in the exchange of com modity equivalents a given amount of labour in one form is exchanged for an equal amount of labour in another form

Hence, *equal right* here is still in principle *bourgeois right,* although principle and practice are no longer at log gerheads, while the exchange of equivalents in commodity exchange only exists *on the average* and not in the indi vidual case

In spite of this advance, this *equal right* is still constantly stigmatised by a bourgeois limitation The right of the pro ducers is *proportional* to the labour they supply, the equality consists in the fact that measurement is made with an *equal standard,* labour

But one man is superior to another physically or mentally and so supplies more labour in the same time, or can labour for a longer time, and labour, to serve as a measure, must be defined by its duration or intensity, otherwise it ceases to be a standard of measurement This *equal* right is an unequal right for unequal labour It recognises no class dif ferences, because everyone is only a worker like everyone else, but it tacitly recognises unequal individual endowment and thus productive capacity as natural privileges *It is, there fore, a right of inequality, in its content, like every right* Right by its very nature can consist only in the application of an equal standard, but unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal) are measurable only by an equal standard in so far as they are brought under an equal point of view, are taken from one *definite* side only, for instance, in the present case, are regarded *only as workers* and nothing more is seen in them, everything else being ignored Further, one worker is mar ried, another not, one has more children than another, and so on and so forth Thus, with an equal performance of la bour, and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on To avoid all these defects, right instead of being equal would have to be unequal

But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of com munist society as it is when it has just emerged after pro longed birth pangs from capitalist society Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cul tural development conditioned thereby

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslav ing subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical

labour, have vanished, after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want, after the productive forces have also increased with the all round development of the individual, and all the springs of co operative wealth flow more abundantly only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society in scribe on its banners From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!

I have dealt more at length with the "undiminished pro ceeds of labour", on the one hand, and with "equal right" and "fair distribution", on the other, in order to show what a crime it is to attempt, on the one hand, to force on our Party again, as dogmas, ideas which in a certain period had some meaning but have now become obsolete verbal rub bish, while again perverting, on the other, the realistic out look, which it cost so much effort to instil into the Party but which has now taken root in it, by means of ideological non sense about right and other trash so common among the democrats and French Socialists

Quite apart from the analysis so far given, it was in gener al a mistake to make a fuss about so called *distribution* and put the principal stress on it

Any distribution whatever of the means of consumption is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves The latter distribution, however, is a feature of the mode of production itself The capitalist mode of production, for example, rests on the fact that the material conditions of production are in the hands of non workers in the form of property in capital and land, while the masses are only owners of the personal condition of produc tion, of labour power If the elements of production are so distributed, then the present day distribution of the means of consumption results automatically If the material condi tions of production are the co operative property of the work ers themselves, then there likewise results a distribution of the means of consumption different from the present one. Vulgar socialism (and from it in turn a section of the democ racy) has taken over from the bourgeois economists the con sideration and treatment of distribution as independent of the mode of production and hence the presentation of social ism as turning principally on distribution After the real re lation has long been made clear, why retrogress again?

4 "The emancipation of labour must be the work of the working class, relatively to which all other classes are *only one reactionary mass*"

The first strophe is taken from the introductory words of the Rules of the International, but "improved" There it is said "The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the workers themselves"*, here, on the contrary, the "working class" has to emancipate what? "Labour" Let him understand who can

In compensation, the antistrophe, on the other hand, is a Lassallean quotation of the first water "relatively to which (the working class) all other classes are *only one reactionary mass*"

In the *Communist Manifesto* it is said "Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a *really revolutionary class* The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of Modern Industry, the proletariat is its special and essential product"**

The bourgeoisie is here conceived as a revolutionary class as the bearer of large scale industry relatively to the feudal lords and the lower middle class, who desire to maintain all social positions that are the creation of obsolete modes of production Thus they do not form *together with the bourgeoisie* only one reactionary mass

On the other hand, the proletariat is revolutionary relatively to the bourgeoisie because, having itself grown up on the basis of large scale industry, it strives to strip off from production the capitalist character that the bourgeoisie seeks to perpetuate But the *Manifesto* adds that the "lower middle class" is becoming revolutionary "in view of [its] impending transfer into the proletariat"

From this point of view, therefore, it is again nonsense to say that it, together with the bourgeoisie, and with the feudal lords into the bargain, "forms only one reactionary mass" relatively to the working class

Has one proclaimed to the artisans, small manufacturers,

* See K Marx, *General Rules of the International Working Men's Association* (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol 2, Moscow, 1969, p 19) *Ed*

** See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol 1, Moscow, 1969, p 117 *Ed*

etc , and *peasants* during the last elections Relatively to us you, together with the bourgeoisie and feudal lords, form only one reactionary mass?

Lassalle knew the *Communist Manifesto* by heart, as his faithful followers know the gospels written by him If, therefore, he falsified it so grossly, this occurred only to put a good colour on his alliance with absolutist and feudal opponents against the bourgeoisie

In the above paragraph, moreover, his oracular saying is dragged in by main force without any connection with the botched quotation from the Rules of the International Thus it is here simply an impertinence, and indeed not at all displeasing to Herr Bismarck, one of those cheap pieces of insolence in which the Marat of Berlin* deals

> 5 "The working class strives for its emancipation first of all *within the framework of the present-day national state* conscious that the necessary result of its efforts which are common to the workers of all civilised countries, will be the international brotherhood of peoples"

Lassalle, in opposition to the *Communist Manifesto* and to all earlier socialism, conceived the workers' movement from the narrowest national standpoint He is being followed in this and that after the work of the International!

It is altogether self evident that, to be able to fight at all the working class must organise itself at home *as a class* and that its own country is the immediate arena of its struggle In so far its class struggle is national, not in substance, but, as the *Communist Manifesto* says, "in form" But the "framework of the present day national state", for instance, the German Empire, is itself in its turn economically "within the framework" of the world market, politically "within the framework" of the system of states Every businessman knows that German trade is at the same time foreign trade, and the greatness of Herr Bismarck consists, to be sure, precisely in his pursuing a kind of *international* policy

And to what does the German workers' party reduce its

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* The 'Marat of Berlin is obviously an ironical reference to Hasselmann the chief editor of the *Neuer Social Demokrat* the central organ of the Lassalleans *Ed*

internationalism? To the consciousness that the result of its efforts will be "*the international brotherhood of peoples*" a phrase borrowed from the bourgeois League of Peace and Freedom,[9] which is intended to pass as equivalent to the international brotherhood of the working classes in the joint struggle against the ruling classes and their governments Not a word, therefore, *about the international functions* of the German working class! And it is thus that it is to challenge its own bourgeoisie which is already linked up in brotherhood against it with the bourgeois of all other countries and Herr Bismarck's international policy of conspiracy!

In fact, the internationalism of the programme stands *even infinitely below* that of the Free Trade Party The latter also asserts that the result of its efforts will be "the international brotherhood of peoples" But it also *does* something to make trade international and by no means contents itself with the consciousness that all peoples are carrying on trade at home

The international activity of the working classes does not in any way depend on the existence of the *International Working Men's Association* This was only the first attempt to create a central organ for that activity, an attempt which was a lasting success on account of the impulse which it gave but which was no longer realisable in *its first historical form* after the fall of the Paris Commune

Bismarck's *Norddeutsche* was absolutely right when it announced, to the satisfaction of its master, that the German workers' party had sworn off internationalism in the new programme [10]

II

> 'Starting from these basic principles the German workers party strives by all legal means for the *free state—and*—socialist society the abolition of the wage system *together with the iron law of wages* and —exploitation in every form, the elimination of all social and political inequality

I shall return to the "free" state later

So, in future, the German workers' party has got to believe in Lassalle's "iron law of wages"! That this may not

be lost, the nonsense is perpetrated of speaking of the "abo lition of the wage system" (it should read system of wage labour) "*together with* the iron law of wages" If I abolish wage labour, then naturally I abolish its laws also, whether they are of "iron" or sponge But Lassalle's attack on wage labour turns almost solely on this so called law In order, therefore, to prove that Lassalle's sect has conquered, the "wage system" must be abolished "*together with* the iron law of wages" and not without it

It is well known that nothing of the "iron law of wages" is Lassalle's except the word "iron" borrowed from Goethe's "great, eternal iron laws" The word *iron* is a label by which the true believers recognise one another But if I take the law with Lassalle's stamp on it and, consequently, in his sense, then I must also take it with his substantiation for it. And what is that? As Lange already showed, shortly after Las salle's death, it is the Malthusian theory of population (preached by Lange himself) But if this theory is correct, then again I *cannot* abolish the law even if I abolish wage labour a hundred times over, because the law then governs not only the system of wage labour but *every* social system Basing themselves directly on this, the economists have been prov ing for fifty years and more that socialism cannot abolish poverty, *which has its basis in nature*, but can only make it *general*, distribute it simultaneously over the whole surface of society!

But all this is not the main thing *Quite apart* from the *false* Lassallean formulation of the law, the truly outra geous retrogression consists in the following

Since Lassalle's death there has asserted itself in *our* Par ty the scientific understanding that wages are not what they *appear* to be, namely, the *value*, or *price*, *of labour*, but only a masked form for the *value*, or *price*, *of labour power* Thereby the whole bourgeois conception of wages hitherto, as well as all the criticism hitherto directed against this con ception, was thrown overboard once for all and it was made clear that the wage worker has permission to work for his own subsistence, that is, *to live*, only in so far as he works for a certain time gratis for the capitalist (and hence also for the latter's co consumers of surplus value), that the whole capitalist system of production turns on the increase of this gratis labour by extending the working day or by devel

oping the productivity, that is, increasing the intensity of labour power, etc , that, consequently, the system of wage labour is a system of slavery, and indeed of a slavery which becomes more severe in proportion as the social productive forces of labour develop, whether the worker receives better or worse payment And after this understanding has gained more and more ground in our Party, one returns to Lassalle's dogmas although one must have known that Lassalle *did not know* what wages were, but following in the wake of the bourgeois economists took the appearance for the essence of the matter

It is as if, among slaves who have at last got behind the secret of slavery and broken out in rebellion, a slave still in thrall to obsolete notions were to inscribe on the programme of the rebellion Slavery must be abolished because the feeding of slaves in the system of slavery cannot exceed a certain low maximum!

Does not the mere fact that the representatives of our Party were capable of perpetrating such a monstrous attack on the understanding that has spread among the mass of our Party prove by itself with what criminal levity and with what lack of conscience they set to work in drawing up this compromise programme!

Instead of the indefinite concluding phrase of the para graph, "the elimination of all social and political inequali ty", it ought to have been said that with the abolition of class distinctions all social and political inequality arising from them would disappear of itself

III

> "The German workers' party, in order *to pave the way to the solution of the social question*, demands the establishment of producers' co-operative societies *with state aid under the democratic control of the toiling people* The producers' co-operative societies *are to be called into being* for industry and agriculture on such a scale *that the socialist organisation of the total labour will arise from them*

After the Lassallean "iron law of wages", the physic of the prophet The way to it is "paved" in worthy fashion In

place of the existing class struggle appears a newspaper scribbler's phrase "the social *question*", to the "*solution*" of which one "paves the way" Instead of arising from the rev olutionary process of transformation of society, the "socia list organisation of the total labour" "arises" from the "state aid" that the state gives to the producers' co operative soci eties and which the *state*, not the worker, "*calls into being*" It is worthy of Lassalle's imagination that with state loans one can build a new society just as well as a new railway!

From the remnants of a sense of shame, "state aid" has been put under the democratic control of the "toiling peo ple"

In the first place, the majority of the "toiling people" in Germany consists of peasants, and not of proletarians

Secondly, "democratic" means in German "*volksherr schaftlich*" ["by the rule of the people"] But what does "control by the rule of the people of the toiling people" mean? And particularly in the case of a toiling people which, through these demands that it puts to the state, ex presses its full consciousness that it neither rules nor is ripe for ruling!

It would be superfluous to deal here with the criticism of the recipe prescribed by Buchez in the reign of Louis Phil ippe in *opposition* to the French Socialists and accepted by the reactionary workers of the *Atelier* [11] The chief offence does not lie in having inscribed this specific nostrum in the programme, but in taking, in general, a retrograde step from the standpoint of a class movement to that of a sectarian movement

That the workers desire to establish the conditions for co operative production on a social scale, and first of all on a national scale, in their own country, only means that they are working to revolutionise the present conditions of pro duction, and it has nothing in common with the foundation of co operative societies with state aid But as far as the present co operative societies are concerned, they are of value *only* in so far as they are the independent creations of the workers and not protégés either of the governments or of the bourgeois

IV

I come now to the democratic section

A '*The free basis of the state*"

First of all, according to II, the German workers' party strives for "the free state"

Free state what is this?

It is by no means the aim of the workers, who have got rid of the narrow mentality of humble subjects, to set the state free In the German Empire the "state" is almost as "free" as in Russia Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it, and today, too, the forms of state are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the "freedom of the state"

The German workers' party at least if it adopts the programme shows that its socialist ideas are not even skin deep, in that, instead of treating existing society (and this holds good for any future one) as the *basis* of the existing state (or of the future state in the case of future society), it treats the state rather as an independent entity that possesses its own *intellectual, ethical and libertarian bases*

And what of the riotous misuse which the programme makes of the words "*present day state*", "*present day society*", and of the still more riotous misconception it creates in regard to the state to which it addresses its demands?

"Present day society" is capitalist society, which exists in all civilised countries, more or less free from medieval admixture, more or less modified by the particular historical development of each country, more or less developed On the other hand, the "present day state" changes with a country's frontier It is different in the Prusso German Empire from what it is in Switzerland, and different in England from what it is in the United States "The present day state" is, therefore, a fiction.

Nevertheless, the different states of the different civilised countries, in spite of their motley diversity of form, all have this in common, that they are based on modern bourgeois society, only one more or less capitalistically developed They

have, therefore, also certain essential characteristics in com mon In this sense it is possible to speak of the "present day state", in contrast with the future, in which its present root, bourgeois society, will have died off

The question then arises what transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are anal ogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically, and one does not get a flea hop near er to the problem by a thousandfold combination of the word people with the word state

Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dicta torship of the proletariat*

Now the programme does not deal with this nor with the future state of communist society

Its political demands contain nothing beyond the old dem ocratic litany familiar to all universal suffrage, direct leg islation, popular rights, a people's militia, etc They are a mere echo of the bourgeois People's Party, of the League of Peace and Freedom They are all demands which, in so far as they are not exaggerated in fantastic presentation, have already been *realised* Only the state where they can be found does not lie within the borders of the German Empire, but in Switzerland, the United States, etc This sort of "state of the future" is a present day state, although existing out side the "framework" of the German Empire

But one thing has been forgotten Since the German work ers' party expressly declares that it acts within "the present day national state", hence within *its own* state, the Prusso German Empire—its demands would indeed otherwise be largely meaningless, since one only demands what one has not got it should not have forgotten the chief thing, name ly, that all those pretty little gewgaws rest on the recogni tion of the so called sovereignty of the people and hence are appropriate only in a *democratic republic*

Since one has not the courage—and wisely so, for the cir cumstances demand caution to demand the democratic republic, as the French workers' programmes under Louis Philippe and under Louis Napoleon did, one should not

have resorted, either, to the subterfuge, neither "honest"* nor decent, of demanding things which have meaning only in a democratic republic from a state which is nothing but a police guarded military despotism, embellished with parliamentary forms, alloyed with a feudal admixture, already influenced by the bourgeoisie and bureaucratically carpentered, and then to assure this state into the bargain that one imagines one will be able to force such things upon it "by legal means"

Even vulgar democracy, which sees the millennium in the democratic republic and has no suspicion that it is precisely in this last form of state of bourgeois society that the class struggle has to be fought out to a conclusion even it towers mountains above this kind of democratism which keeps within the limits of what is permitted by the police and not permitted by logic

That, in fact, by the word "state" is meant the government machine, or the state in so far as it forms a special organism separated from society through division of labour, is shown by the words "the German workers' party demands *as the economic basis of the state* a single progressive income tax", etc Taxes are the economic basis of the government machinery and of nothing else In the state of the future, existing in Switzerland, this demand has been pretty well fulfilled Income tax presupposes various sources of income of the various social classes, and hence capitalist society It is, therefore, nothing remarkable that the Liverpool financial reformers, bourgeois headed by Gladstone's brother, are putting forward the same demand as the programme

> B "The German workers party demands as the intellectual and ethical basis of the state
>
> "1 Universal and *equal elementary education* by the state. Universal compulsory school attendance. Free instruction '

Equal elementary education? What idea lies behind these words? Is it believed that in present day society (and it is only with this one has to deal) education can be *equal* for all classes? Or is it demanded that the upper classes also shall

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* "*Honest* was the epithet applied to the Eisenachers Here a play upon words *Ed*

be compulsorily reduced to the modicum of education the elementary school that alone is compatible with the economic conditions not only of the wage workers but of the peasants as well?

"Universal compulsory school attendance Free instruction" The former exists even in Germany, the second in Switzerland and in the United States in the case of elementary schools If in some states of the latter country higher educational institutions are also "free" that only means in fact defraying the cost of the education of the upper classes from the general tax receipts Incidentally, the same holds good for 'free administration of justice" demanded under A, 5 The administration of criminal justice is to be had free everywhere, that of civil justice is concerned almost exclusively with conflicts over property and hence affects almost exclusively the possessing classes Are they to carry on their litigation at the expense of the national coffers?

The paragraph on the schools should at least have demanded technical schools (theoretical and practical) in combination with the elementary school

"*Elementary education by the state*" is altogether objectionable Defining by a general law the expenditures on the elementary schools, the qualifications of the teaching staff, the branches of instruction, etc, and, as is done in the United States, supervising the fulfilment of these legal specifications by state inspectors, is a very different thing from appointing the state as the educator of the people! Government and Church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school Particularly, indeed, in the Prusso German Empire (and one should not take refuge in the rotten subterfuge that one is speaking of a "state of the future", we have seen how matters stand in this respect) the state has need, on the contrary, of a very stern education by the people

But the whole programme, for all its democratic clang, is tainted through and through by the Lassallean sect's servile belief in the state, or, what is no better, by a democratic belief in miracles, or rather it is a compromise between these two kinds of belief in miracles, both equally remote from socialism

"*Freedom of science,*" says a paragraph of the Prussian Constitution Why, then, here?

"*Freedom of conscience*"! If one desired at this time of the *Kulturkampf*[12] to remind liberalism of its old catchwords, it surely could have been done only in the following form Everyone should be able to attend to his religious as well as his bodily needs without the police sticking their noses in But the workers' party ought at any rate in this connection to have expressed its awareness of the fact that bourgeois "freedom of conscience" is nothing but the toleration of all possible kinds of *religious freedom of conscience*, and that for its part it endeavours rather to liberate the conscience from the witchery of religion But one chooses not to transgress the "bourgeois" level

I have now come to the end, for the appendix that now follows in the programme does not constitute a *characteristic* component part of it Hence I can be very brief here

2 "Normal working day"

In no other country has the workers' party limited itself to such an indefinite demand, but has always fixed the length of the working day that it considers normal under the given circumstances

3 "Restriction of female labour and prohibition of child labour '

The standardisation of the working day must include the restriction of female labour, in so far as it relates to the duration, intermissions, etc, of the working day, otherwise it could only mean the exclusion of female labour from branches of industry that are especially unhealthy for the female body or are objectionable morally for the female sex If that is what was meant, it should have been said so

"*Prohibition of child labour*" Here it was absolutely essential to state the *age limit*

A general prohibition of child labour is incompatible with the existence of large scale industry and hence an empty, pious wish Its realisation if it were possible would be reactionary, since, with a strict regulation of the working time according to the different age groups and other safety measures for the protection of children, an early combination of productive labour with education is one of the most potent means for the transformation of present day society'

4 "State supervision of factory, work shop and domestic industry'

In consideration of the Prusso German state it should definitely have been demanded that the inspectors are to be removable only by a court of law, that any worker can have them prosecuted for neglect of duty, that they must belong to the medical profession

5 "Regulation of prison labour"

A petty demand in a general workers' programme In any case, it should have been clearly stated that there is no intention from fear of competition to allow ordinary crimi nals to be treated like beasts, and especially that there is no desire to deprive them of their sole means of betterment, productive labour This was surely the least one might have expected from Socialists

6. "An effective liability law"

It should have been stated what is meant by an "effective" liability law

Be it noted, incidentally, that in speaking of the normal working day the part of factory legislation that deals with health regulations and safety measures, etc, has been over looked The liability law only comes into operation when these regulations are infringed

In short, this appendix also is distinguished by slovenly editing

Dixi et salvavi animam meam *

Written by Marx in April or early May 1875

Abridged version published in the journal *Die Neue Zeit* Bd 1 No 18, 1890-91

* I have spoken and saved my soul. *Ed*

■

Frederick Engels

LETTER TO A. BEBEL

■

London, March 18-28, 1875

Dear Bebel,

I received your letter of February 23 and am glad you are in such good health.

You ask me what we think of the unification business. Unfortunately we have fared the same as you. Neither Liebknecht nor anyone else has sent us any information and we too, therefore, know only what is in the papers, and there was nothing in them until the draft programme appeared about a week ago! This draft has certainly astonished us not a little.

Our Party has so frequently made offers of reconciliation or at least of co-operation to the Lassalleans and has been so frequently and contemptuously repulsed by the Hasenclevers, Hasselmanns, and Tölckes that any child must have drawn the conclusion: if these gentlemen are now coming and offering reconciliation themselves they must be in a damned tight fix. But considering the well-known character of these people it is our duty to utilise their fix in order to stipulate for every possible guarantee, so that they shall not re-establish their shaken position in the opinion of the workers at the expense of our Party. They should have been received with extreme coolness and mistrust, and union made dependent on the extent to which they were willing to drop their sectarian slogans and their state aid and to accept in its essentials the Eisenach programme of 1869[5] or a revised edition of it adapted to the present day. Our Party has *absolutely nothing to learn* from the Lassalleans in the theoretical sphere and therefore in what is decisive for the programme, but the Lassalleans certainly have something to learn from our Party; the first condition of union should be that they cease to be sectarians, Lassalleans, and above all

that the universal panacea of state aid should be, if not entirely relinquished, at any rate recognised by them as a subordinate transitional measure, one among and alongside of many other possible ones The draft programme shows that our people are a hundred times superior theoretically to the Lassallean leaders but to the same extent inferior to them in political cunning, the "honest"* have been once more cruelly gypped by the dishonest

In the first place Lassalle's high sounding but historically false phrase is accepted in relation to the working class all other classes are only one reactionary mass This proposition is true only in a few exceptional cases for instance, in a revolution of the proletariat, like the Commune, or in a country where not only the bourgeoisie has moulded state and society in its own image but where in its wake the democratic petty bourgeoisie, too, has already carried out this remoulding down to its final consequences If in Ger many, for instance, the democratic petty bourgeoisie belonged to this reactionary mass, how could the Social Democratic Workers' Party have gone hand in hand with it with the People's Party for years? How can the *Volksstaat* take almost the whole of its political contents from the petty bourgeois democratic *Frankfurter Zeitung*[13]? And how comes it that no less than seven demands are included in this pro gramme which directly and literally coincide with the pro gramme of the People's Party and the petty bourgeois dem ocracy? I mean the seven political demands, 1 to 5 and 1 to 2, of which there is not a single one that is not *bourgeois* dem ocratic [14]

Secondly, the principle that the workers' movement is an international movement is, to all intents and purposes, com pletely disavowed for the present day, and at that by people who have upheld this principle most gloriously for five whole years under the most difficult conditions The German workers' position at the head of the European movement reposes *essentially* on their genuinely international attitude during the war[15], no other proletariat would have behaved so well And now this principle is to be disavowed by them at the very moment when the workers everywhere abroad are emphasising it in the same degree as the governments

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* The name applied to Eisenachers *Ed*

are striving to suppress every attempted manifestation of it in any organisation! And what is left of the internationa lism of the workers' movement then? The faint prospect not even of a future co operation of the European workers for their emancipation no, but of a future "international brotherhood of peoples", of the "United States of Europe" of the bourgeois of the Peace League!

It was of course quite unnecessary to speak of the Interna tional as such But surely the very least would have been to make no retreat from the programme of 1869 and to say about the following *although* the German workers' party is operating *first of all* within the state boundaries laid down for it (it has no right to speak in the name of the European proletariat and especially no right to say something false), it is conscious of its solidarity with the workers of all countries and will always be ready hereafter, as it has been hitherto, to fulfil the obligations imposed upon it by this solidarity Obligations of that kind exist even without directly proclaiming or regarding oneself as a part of the Interna tional, for instance, help and abstention from blacklegging in strikes, care taken that the Party organs keep the German workers informed about the movement abroad, agitation against the threat or the outbreak of dynastic wars, beha viour during such wars similar to that carried out in model fashion in 1870 and 1871, etc

Thirdly, our people have allowed the Lassallean "iron law of wages" to be foisted upon them, a law based on a quite antiquated economic view, namely, that the worker receives on the average only the *minimum* of the wage, because, according to Malthus's theory of population, there are always too many workers (this was Lassalle's argument) Now Marx has proved in detail in *Capital* that the laws regulating wages are very complicated, that sometimes one predominates and sometimes another, according to circum stances, that therefore they are in no sense iron but on the contrary very elastic, and that the matter can by no means be dismissed in a few words, as Lassalle imagined The Mal thusian argument in support of the law, which Lassalle copied from Malthus and Ricardo (with a distortion of the latter), as it is to be found, for instance, in the *Arbeiterlesebuch*, page 5, quoted from another pamphlet of Lassalle's, has been refuted in detail by Marx in the section on the "Accumula

tion of Capital"* Thus by adopting Lassalle's "iron law" we commit ourselves to a false thesis with a false substantiation

Fourthly, the programme puts forward as its *sole social* demand Lassalle's state aid in its most naked form, as Lassalle stole it from Buchez And this after Bracke has very well exposed the utter futility of this demand[16] and after almost all, if not all, our Party speakers have been obliged to come out against this "state aid" in fighting the Lassalleans! Lower than this our Party could not humiliate itself Internationalism brought down to Amand Gogg and socialism to the bourgeois republican Buchez, who put forward this demand *in opposition to the Socialists,* in order to get the better of them!

At the most, however, "state aid" in the Lassallean sense is only a *single* measure among many others designed to attain the end here lamely described as "paving the way to the solution of the social question" as if a theoretically *unsolved* social *question* still existed for us! So if one says the German workers' party strives for the abolition of wage labour, and with it of class distinctions, by the establishment of co operative production in industry and agriculture and on a national scale, it supports every measure appropriate for the attainment of this end! then no Lassallean can have anything against it

Fifthly, there is not a word about the organisation of the working class as a class by means of the trade unions And that is a very essential point, for this is the real class organisation of the proletariat, in which it carries on its daily struggles with capital, in which it trains itself, and which nowadays even amid the worst reaction (as in Paris at present) can simply no longer be smashed Considering the importance which this organisation has attained also in Germany, it would be absolutely necessary in our opinion to mention it in the programme and if possible to leave open a place for it in the Party organisation

All this has been done by our people to please the Lassalleans And what has the other side conceded? That a heap of rather confused *purely democratic demands* should figure in the programme, of which several are a mere matter

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* Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol I, Moscow 1965, pp 564 712 *Ed*

of fashion, as, for instance, the "legislation by the people which exists in Switzerland and does more harm than good if it does anything at all *Administration* by the people, that would be something Equally lacking is the first condition of all freedom that all officials should be responsible for all their official acts to every citizen before the ordinary courts and according to common law Of the fact that such demands as freedom of science and freedom of conscience figure in every liberal bourgeois programme and appear somewhat strange here, I shall say nothing more

The free people's state is transformed into the free state Taken in its grammatical sense, a free state is one where the state is free in relation to its citizens, hence a state with a despotic government. The whole talk about the state should be dropped, especially since the Commune, which was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word The "*people's state*" has been thrown in our faces by the Anarchists to the point of disgust, although already Marx's book against Proudhon* and later the *Communist Manifesto*** directly declare that with the introduction of the socialist order of society the state will dissolve of itself and disappear As, therefore, the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution, to hold down one's adversaries by force, it is pure nonsense to talk of a free people's state so long as the proletariat still *uses* the state, it does not use it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist We would therefore propose to replace *state* everywhere by *Gemeinwesen*, a good old German word which can very well convey the meaning of the French word "com mune"

"The elimination of all social and political inequality" is also a very questionable phrase in place of "the abolition of all class distinctions" Between one country and another, one province and another and even one locality and another there will always exist a *certain* inequality in the conditions

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* Karl Marx *The Poverty of Philosophy Answer to the "Philosophy of Poverty" by M Proudhon Ed*

** See Marx and Engels *Selected Works* in three vols, Vol. 1 Moscow, 1969, pp 108 37 *Ed*

of life, which it will be possible to reduce to a minimum but never entirely remove Alpine dwellers will always have different conditions of life from those of people living on plains The idea of socialist society as the realm of *equality* is a one sided French idea resting upon the old "liberty, equality, fraternity" an idea which was justified as a *stage of development* in its own time and place but which, like all the one sided ideas of the earlier socialist schools, should now be overcome, for it only produces confusion in people's heads and more precise modes of presentation of the matter have been found

I shall stop, although almost every word in this programme, which has, moreover, been composed in a flat and flaccid style, could be criticised It is of such a character that if adopted Marx and I shall *never* be able to give our adherence to the *new* party established on this basis, and shall have very seriously to consider what our attitude to wards it in public as well should be You must remember that abroad *we* are made responsible for any and every ut terance and action of the German Social Democratic Work ers' Party Thus Bakunin in his work *Statehood and Anar chy,* where we have to answer for every thoughtless word spoken or written by Liebknecht since the *Demokratisches Wochenblatt*[17] was started People just imagine that we run the whole show from here, while you know as well as I that we have hardly ever interfered in any way in internal Party affairs, and when we did, then only in order to make good, as far as possible, blunders, and *only theoretical* blunders, which have in our opinion been committed But you will re alise for yourself that this programme marks a turning point which may very easily compel us to refuse any and every responsibility for the party which accepts it

In general, the official programme of a party is of less importance than what the party does But a *new* programme is after all a banner publicly raised, and the outside world judges the party by it It should, therefore, on no account take a step backwards, as this one does in comparison with the Eisenach programme One should also take into con sideration what the workers of other countries will say to this programme, what impression will be produced by this bending of the knee to Lassalleanism on the part of the whole German socialist proletariat.

At the same time I am convinced that a union on *this* basis will not last a year Are the best minds in our Party to lend themselves to chewing over the Lassallean precepts on the iron law of wages and state aid learnt by rote? I should like to see you doing it, for instance! And if they did do this they would be hissed down by their audiences And I am sure the Lassalleans will insist on just *these* points of the programme like the Jew Shylock on his pound of flesh * The separation will come, but we shall have made Hassel mann, Hasenclever, Tolcke and Co "honest" again, we shall come out of the separation weaker and the Lassalleans stronger, our Party will have lost its political virginity and will never again be able to come out wholeheartedly against the Lassallean phrases which it will have inscribed for a time on its own banner, and if the Lassalleans then once more say that they are the most genuine, the only workers' party, while our people are bourgeois, the programme will be there to prove it All the socialist measures in it are *theirs*, and all *our* Party has put into it are the demands of the petty bourgeois democracy, which is nevertheless de scribed *also by it* in the same programme as a part of the "re actionary mass"!

I had let this letter lie here as you are to be freed only on April 1, in honour of Bismarck's birthday, and I did not want to expose it to the chance of being intercepted in any attempt to smuggle it in And now a letter has just come from Bracke, who has also his grave doubts about the pro gramme and wants to know our opinion I am therefore send ing this letter to him to be forwarded, so that he can read it and I need not write all this stuff over again Moreover, I have also told the unvarnished truth to Ramm, to Liebk necht I wrote only briefly I will not forgive him for never telling us a *single word* about the whole thing (while Ramm and others thought he had given us exact information) until it was too late, so to speak But this is what he has always done hence the large amount of disagreeable correspond ence which we, both Marx and I, have had with him, but this time it is really too bad and *we are certainly not going along with him*

See that you manage to come here in the summer You

* Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Scene 3 *Ed*

will, of course, stay with me, and if the weather is good we can go sea-bathing for a couple of days, from which you will derive a lot of benefit after your long spell in jail.

Friendly greetings!

Yours,
F. E.

Marx has recently moved to a new flat. Now his address is: 41 Maitland Park, Crescent, North-West, London.

First published in the book:
A. Bebel. *Aus meinem Leben.*
Vol. II, Stuttgart, 1911

■

Frederick Engels

LETTER TO K KAUTSKY

■

London, February 23, 1891

Dear Kautsky,

You will have received my speedy congratulations of the day before yesterday So now to return again to our mut tons, Marx's letter *

The fear that it would put a weapon in the hands of our opponents was unfounded Malicious insinuations, of course, are being attached to anything and everything, but on the whole the impression made on our opponents was one of complete disconcertment at this ruthless self criticism, and it gave rise to the feeling what an inner power must be pos sessed by a party that can afford such a thing! That can be seen from the hostile newspapers that you sent me (for which many thanks) and from those to which I have other wise had access And, frankly speaking, that really was my intention when I published the document That at the first moment some persons here and there could not but be un pleasantly affected by it I was aware of, but it was not to be avoided and it was amply outweighed, in my view, by the material content of the document I knew, also, that the Party was quite strong enough to stand it, and I reckoned that it would today also be *able to stomach* this unconcealed language used fifteen years ago, that one would point with justifiable pride to this test of strength and would say Where is there another party that can dare the like? That has been left, meanwhile, to the Saxonian and Vienna *Ar beiter Zeitung* and to the *Zuricher Post* [18]

That in No 21 of the *Neue Zeit*[19] you take upon yourself the responsibility for the publication is very nice of you, but do not forget that after all I gave the first impulse and moreover to a certain extent forced your hand I claim,

* Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (see pp 9 30) *Ed*

therefore, the main responsibility for myself As far as details are concerned, there can certainly always be different opinions about them I have deleted and altered everything that you and Dietz objected to, and if Dietz had marked even more I would still, as far as possible, have been amenable even then, of that I have always given you proof But, as far as the main point is concerned, it was *my duty* to publish the thing once the programme had come up for discussion And especially after Liebknecht's report in Halle,[20] in which he in part utilised his extracts from it unceremoniously as his own property, and in part polemised against it without specifying it by name, Marx would certainly have confronted this rehash with the original and it was my duty in his place to do the same Unfortunately, at that time I had not yet got the document, I only found it considerably later after much search

You say Bebel writes to you that Marx's treatment of Lassalle has caused bad blood among the old Lassalleans That may be so These people, you see, do not know the real story and nothing appears to have happened to enlighten them about it If they do not know that Lassalle's whole greatness rested on this, that for years Marx allowed him to parade the results of Marx's research as his own and, owing to defective education in economics, to distort them into the bargain, then that is not my fault But I am Marx's literary executor and as such I have my duty to perform

Lassalle has belonged to history for twenty six years While under the Exceptional Law[21] historical criticism of him was left in abeyance, the time is at last at hand when it must have its say and Lassalle's position in relation to Marx be made plain The legend that conceals the true image of Lassalle and glorifies him can surely not become an article of faith of the Party However highly one may estimate Lassalle's services to the movement, his historical role in it remains an equivocal one Lassalle the Socialist is dogged at every step by Lassalle the demagogue Everywhere, Lassalle the conductor of the Hatzfeldt lawsuit[22] shows through Lassalle the agitator and organiser the same cynicism in the choice of means, the same preference for surrounding himself with suspicious and corrupt people who can be used as mere tools and discarded `Until 1862 a specifically Prussian vulgar democrat in practice, with strong

Bonapartist leanings (I have just looked through his letters to Marx), he suddenly switched round for purely personal reasons and began his agitation, and before two years had gone by he was demanding that the workers should take the part of the monarchy against the bourgeoisie, and intriguing with Bismarck, akin to him in character, in a way that would certainly have led to the actual betrayal of the movement, if fortunately for him he had not been shot in time In his agitational writings, the correct things that he borrowed from Marx are so much interwoven with his own Lassallean, invariably false expositions that the two are hardly to be separated The section of the workers that feels itself injured by Marx's judgement knows Lassalle only through his two years of agitation, and even these only through coloured spectacles But historical criticism cannot stand eternal ly, hat in hand, before such prejudices It was my duty fi nally to settle accounts between Marx and Lassalle That has been done For the time being I can content myself with that Moreover, I myself have other things to do now And the published ruthless judgement of Marx on Lassalle will itself have effect and give others courage But should I be forced to it, there would be no choice for me I should have to make a clean sweep of the Lassalle legend once and for all

That voices have been raised in the Reichstag group say ing that the *Neue Zeit* should be placed under censorship is indeed a fine affair What is this, the ghost of the group's dictatorship during the Anti Socialist Law (which was, of course, necessary and excellently carried out), or remem brance of von Schweitzer's whilom strict organisation? It is in fact a brilliant idea to put German socialist science, after its liberation from Bismarck's Socialist Law, under a new Socialist Law to be manufactured and carried out by the Social Democratic Party authorities themselves For the rest, it is ordained that trees shall not grow into the sky *

The article in the *Vorwarts*[23] does not stir me much I shall wait for Liebknecht's account of what happened and shall then reply to both in as friendly a tone as possible In the *Vorwarts* article there are only a few inaccuracies to be

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* The original gives the German proverb Im ubrigen ist dafur gesorgt, dass die Baume nicht in den Himmel wachsen. *Ed*

corrected (for example, that we did not desire unity, that events proved Marx wrong, etc) and a few obvious things to be confirmed With this answer I intend then, for my part, to close the discussion unless new attacks or false assertions compel me to continue

Tell Dietz that I am working on the *Origin* * But today Fischer writes to me and what he wants is three new prefaces[124]

Yours,
F E

First published in Russian in the journal *Bolshevik* No 22, 1931

* Engels was preparing the fourth German edition of his *Origin of the Family Private Property and the State* (see Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* in three vols, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1970, pp 191 334) *Ed*

■ *Notes*

[1] This foreword was written by Engels in connection with the publication of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* in 1891 When preparing *Critique of the Gotha Programme* for the press Engels met with opposition on the part of German Social Democratic leaders and had to agree to certain changes and omissions in the text This edition gives the translation of the complete original text of *Critique of the Gotha Programme* according to the manuscript which has been preserved p 7

[2] At the *Gotha Unity Congress*, which met between May 22 and 27, 1875 the two trends in the German working class movement the Social Democratic Workers Party (Eisenachers) led by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht and the Lassallean General Association of German Workers united to form the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany This put an end to the split in the German working class The draft programme of the united party, which Marx and Engels subjected to withering criticism, was adopted by the Congress with only insignificant corrections p 7

[3] *The German Social Democratic Congress in Halle* met between October 12 and 18 1890 It adopted a decision to draft a new programme and publish it three months before the next Party Congress in Erfurt so as to discuss it first in local party organisations and in the press. p 7

[4] *The Hague Congress of the International Working Men's Association* was held between September 2 and 7, 1872 It was attended by 65 delegates from 15 national organisations, including Marx and Engels who directed the entire work of the Congress The Congress witnessed the culmination of the struggle which Marx, Engels and their followers had waged for many years against all kinds of petty bourgeois sectarianism in the working class movement The splitting activities of the anarchists were denounced and their leaders expelled from the International p 8

[5] *The German Social Democratic Workers Party* which was formed at a general Congress of Social Democrats from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, held in Eisenach between August 7 and 9, 1869, became known as the Eisenachers. The programme adopted at the

Congress was in the main based on the principles advanced by the First International pp 9, 51

[6] The reference is to Bakunin's book, *Statehood and Anarchy*, published in Switzerland in 1873 p 9

[7] *The People's Party* was established in 1865, it was made up of democratic elements from the petty bourgeoisie and part of the bourgeoisie, particularly in South Germany The party opposed Germany's unification as a centralised democratic republic under Prussian hegemony and advocated the idea of a federative German state, the so-called 'Greater Germany' including Prussia and Austria. p 9

[8] The reference is to the publishing house of the Social Democratic Workers' Party which published the newspaper *Volksstaat* and social democratic literature. It was headed by August Bebel

Der Volksstaat the central organ of the German Social Democratic Workers Party (the Eisenachers) it was published in Leipzig from October 2, 1869, to September 29, 1876, under the editorship of Wilhelm Liebknecht. Marx and Engels contributed to the paper and helped to edit it. p 10

[9] *The League of Peace and Freedom* a bourgeois pacifist organisation founded by petty bourgeois republicans and liberals in Switzerland in 1867 By asserting that it was possible to prevent wars by creating 'the United States of Europe" the League spread false ideas among the masses aimed to divert the proletariat from the class struggle p 21

[10] *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* a daily reactionary newspaper published in Berlin from 1861 to 1918 Between the 1860s and 1880s it was the official organ of Bismarck's government. Marx is referring to an article in its issue of March 20, 1875 p 21

[11] *l'Atelier* a monthly magazine published in Paris from 1840 to 1850 It was the organ of artisans and workers adhering to Christian socialism p 24

[12] *Kulturkampf* the name given by bourgeois liberals to a system of reforms implemented in the seventies of the last century by Bismarck's government under the banner of a campaign for secular culture In the eighties, however, in order to consolidate reactionary forces, Bismarck repealed the greater part of these reforms p 29

[13] *Frankfurter Zeitung und Handelsblatt* (Frankfurt Gazette and Commercial Sheet) a petty bourgeois democratic daily published from 1856 (under this name from 1866) to 1943 p 32

[14] Engels is here referring to the following articles of the draft Gotha Programme

"The German Workers' Party demands as the free basis of the state

I Universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot for all males who have reached the age of twenty one, for all elections, national and local 2 Direct legislation by the people including the right to initiate and to reject bills. 3 Universal military training The standing army to be replaced by a people's militia. Decisions regarding war and peace are to be taken by a representative assem

bly of the people 4 Abolition of all exceptional laws in particular the laws on the press association and assembly 5 Jurisdiction by the people Administration of justice without fees

"The German Workers' Party demands as the intellectual and moral basis of the state

"1 Universal and equal public education to be provided by the state Compulsory attendance Free instruction. 2 Freedom of scientific thought. Freedom of conscience" p 32

[15] The reference is to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 71 p 32

[16] Cf W Bracke *Der Lassalle sche Vorschlag* (Lassale s Proposal) Braunschweig, 1873 p 34

[17] *Demokratisches Wochenblatt* (Democratic Weekly) German workers newspaper published in Leipzig from January 1868 to September 1869, it was edited by Wilhelm Liebknecht. The paper played an important part in creating the German Social Democratic Workers Party In 1869, at the Eisenach Congress it was made the central organ of the party and became known as *Volksstaat* (see Note 8) Marx and Engels were among its contributors. p 36

[18] Engels refers to the Social Democratic newspapers which in February 1891 carried letters approving the publication of Marx s *Critique of the Gotha Programme*

Arbeiter Zeitung (Workers' Newspaper) organ of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, published in Vienna from 1889 and edited by Victor Adler In the 1890s it carried a number of Engels s articles

Sachsische Arbeiter Zeitung (Saxon Workers' Newspaper) German Social Democratic daily, published in Dresden from 1890 to 1908 in the early 1890s it was the organ of the oppositional semi anarchist group of "the Young

Zuricher Post—democratic newspaper published in Zurich between 1879 and 1936. p 39

[19] *Die Neue Zeit* a magazine, theoretical organ of the German Social Democratic Party, published in Stuttgart from 1883 to 1923 Between 1885 and 1894 it carried a number of Engels s articles p 39

[20] Liebknecht made a report on the party programme at the Social Democratic Congress in Halle (see Note 3) p 40

[21] *Exceptional Law Against the Socialists* was introduced in Germany on October 21, 1878 This law banned all organisations of the Social Democratic Party, mass workers' organisations and the labour press on the basis of this law socialist literature was confiscated and Social Democrat subjected to reprisals. Due to pressure exerted by the workers mass movement the law was abrogated on October 1, 1890 p 40

[22] The reference is to the divorce case of Countess Sophie Hatzfeldt conducted by Lassalle in 1846-56 He exaggerated the significance of this lawsuit in defence of a member of an old aristocratic family comparing it to the struggle for the cause of the oppressed. p 40

[23] *Vorwarts Berliner Volksblatt* (Forward Berlin People s Gazette) German Social Democratic daily, founded in 1884 and published un

der this name from 1891, from 1891 it was the central organ of the Social Democratic Party of Germany

The reference is to the editorial printed on February 13 1891 which expressed the Reichstag Social Democratic group's disapproval of Marx's critical remarks concerning the Gotha Programme and of his appraisal of Lassalle's role p 41

[24] In his letter to Engels of February 20 1891 Fischer wrote of the Party Executive's decision to republish Marx's *The Civil War in France* and *Wage Labour and Capital* and Engels's *Socialism Utopian and Scientific,* and asked Engels to write prefaces to these works p 42

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